DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 409 059 JC 970 375

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TITLE	Freshman Students Survey, Westchester Community College, 1996.
INSTITUTION	Westchester Community Coll., Valhalla, NY. Office of Institutional Research and Planning.
PUB DATE	Apr 97
NOTE	10p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Enrollment Trends; Full Time Students; *Hispanic Americans; Part Time Students; School Demography; *Student Characteristics; *Two Year College Students; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Hispanic American Students; Westchester Community College NY

ABSTRACT

In 1996, New York's Westchester Community College undertook a study of changes in the demographic characteristics of the college's student body, focusing on an increase in enrollment of Hispanic students in fall 1996. Data were gathered through the American College Testing Freshman Survey administered to 776 first-time students in 46 English composition, literature, remedial English, and basic writing classes in fall 1996. Study findings included the following: (1) among full-time students, 19.1% reported being of Hispanic background, 22.3% reported that English was not their native tongue, and 77.2% were under 20 years of age; (2) among part-time students, 22.2% reported being of Hispanic background, 30.3% reported that English was not their native tongue, and 31.8% were over 30 years of age; (3) part-time students had a higher percentage of Black and Asian students than full-time students; (4) among students who transferred from another institution, 21.6% reported being of Hispanic background, 26.9% reported that English was not their native tongue, 41.5% were between the ages of 20 and 25, and 40.1% were over 25; and (5) it is expected that the increase of Hispanic students will require special student services, teaching techniques, and courses. (TGI)

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1996 Freshman Students Survey

Westchester Community College

Conducted Fall, 1996

Introduction and Methodology 1

Full-time Freshman Students 1

Part-time Freshman Students 5

Transfer Freshman Students 6

Summary and Conclusion 8

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Dr. Marcia M. Lee, Director
April, 1997

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1996 Freshmen Students Survey

Westchester Community College

For over a decade demographers and planners in Westchester have been speaking about the growing population of Hispanic residents in the county. A survey of Fall 1996 Westchester Community College freshman students shows that Hispanic students have finally begun to enroll in significant numbers at the College, too. It also shows some important differences between the first-time **full-time** students, the first-time **part-time** students, and the first-time **transfer** students.

It is the purpose of this report to discuss these changes and differences. Since the demographic characteristics of the students often drive decisions in responding to student needs, knowledge of these changes and differences may very well affect the way we administer student services, the methods used to teach these students, and even the courses we offer.

Methodology: This report is based on the 1996 ACT Freshmen Survey conducted on 776 WCC students enrolled in forty-six, Fall 1996 English Composition and Literature 1 classes, Remedial English classes (including ESL courses), and Basic Writing Skills classes. The survey includes both day and evening students taking classes both on and off campus. This report focuses first on **full-time,** first-time students. It then turns to **part-time** first-time students and **transfer** first-time students.

Full-time, Freshman Students

Ethnic Background. A substantially higher percentage of 1996 freshmen **full-time*** students reported being Hispanic than in any previous entering class recorded on the college Student Data File. Almost one-fifth or 19.1% reported an Hispanic background with 8.1% from Puerto Rica, 1.4% Mexican American, and 9.6% *other Latino*, as shown in Table I. The African American population reported a slight decline, down from a high of 16% to 13.0%, while both White/Caucasians (59.7%) and Asian Americans (2.9%) continue to decline slightly from previous years.

* The definition of a first-time, full-time student is any student who is enrolled for the first time anywhere in a college degree bearing program and taking 12 credits or more. This includes students who took courses in the preceding summer session, but did not begin their academic program until the Fall semester.

Native English Speaker Over one-fifth (22.3%) reported that English was not their native tongue, as shown in Table II.

Citizenship Status. A relatively large percentage of students are holding green cards, as shown in Table III. Over seventeen percent (17.2%) reported being *permanent residents with green cards*. Four-fifths (81.4%) stated they were US citizens, while a very small percentage (1.4%) reported having *neither* a green card nor US citizenship.

Table I

Racial Background*	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer**
	N=345	*N*=63	*N*=328
White/Caucasian	59.7%	41.3%	50.3%
African American/Black	13.0%	25.4%	17.7%
American Indian	1.4%	1.6%	2.1%
Asian American/Asian	2.9%	9.5%	8.5%
Mexican American/Chicano	1.4%	1.6%	1.5%
Puerto Rican	8.1%	14.3%	7.3%
other Latino	9.6%	6.3%	12.8%
other	9.6%	6.3%	10.1%

Table II

Student Native English Speaker	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=363	*N*=66	*N*=338
yes	77.7%	69.7%	73.1%
no	22.3%	30.3%	26.9%

Table III

Citizenship Status	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=354	*N*=64	*N*=329
U.S. citizen	81.4%	73.4%	72.3%
permanent resident (green card)	17.2%	17.2%	21.3%
neither	1.4%	9.4%	6.4%

Religious Preference. For the first time, this survey supplies statistics on the religious preferences of our freshmen students and their parents. Over half of our **full-time** freshmen students are Roman Catholic (53.6%), as shown in Table IV. Protestants comprise 22.9% while Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist religions each comprise 1.9%. Approximately fourteen percent (13.6 %) of the students indicated no religious

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* Percentages will add up to more than 100 if any students checked more than one category.

** For purposes of this report, the terms *first-time student* and *freshmen student* will be used interchangeably.

preference. The religious preferences of their parents do not differ significantly in percentages from those of the students.

Table IV

Student's Religious Preference	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=323	*N*=58	*N*=315
Baptist	5.9%	12.1%	8.3%
Buddhist	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%
Eastern Orthodox	0.9%	1.7%	0.3%
Episcopal	1.9%	1.7%	1.3%
Islamic	1.9%	1.7%	2.2%
Jewish	1.9%	1.7%	2.2%
Lutheran	0.6%	1.7%	2.5%
Methodist	0.6%	1.7%	1.3%
Presbyterian	0.9%	3.4%	0.3%
Roman Catholic	53.6%	27.6%	50.5%
other Protestant	12.4%	18.9%	12.4%
other religion	3.9%	6.9%	6.0%
none	13.6%	19.0%	11.1%

Parental Income. For purposes of awarding Section 8 housing allowances, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets the *low income* level for Westchester county at $41,350. It sets the *very low income* level at $25,850. Almost half (49.4%) of the **full-time**, first time students reported parental incomes under the *low income level* of $41,350, as shown in Table V. Of this low income group, approximately half of them fell below the *very low income* level of $25,000, comprising 23.5% of the total students surveyed. A large percentage of Westchester Community College students, therefore, stand on firm ground in seeking financial aid. At the other end of the spectrum, 18.2% of the students reported parental incomes over $75,000 a year, and one-third (32.3%) reported an income between $40,000 to $74,999 students. In short, approximately half of the **full-time** freshmen students surveyed fell below the *low income* level for Westchester county, and the other half, above.

Table V

Estimated Parental Income	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=247	*N*=30	*N*=224
less than $9,999	13.4%	13.4%	13.4%
$10,000 to $19,9999	10.1%	10.0%	8.5%
$20,000 to $24,999	6.9%	0.0%	6.3%
$25,000 to $29,999	9.3%	3.3%	8.9%
$30,000 to $39,999	9.7%	20.0%	12.9%
$40,000 to $49,999	10.9%	13.3%	6.7%
$50,000 to $59,999	9.7%	6.7%	6.7%
$60,000 to $74,999	11.7%	13.3%	10.7%
$75,000 to $99,999	8.1%	6.7%	9.8%
$100,000 or more	10.1%	13.3%	16.8%

Status of Parents Over a fourth of the students (28.3%) reported that their parents were divorced or separated, while another 11.8% reported that one or both were deceased, as shown in Table VI. This leaves approximately three-fifths (59.9%) reporting that their parents were living together.

Table VI

Status of Parents	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=357	*N*=65	*N*=329
living with each other	59.9%	47.7%	51.7%
divorced or separated	28.3%	33.8%	28.3%
one or both deceased	11.8%	18.5%	20.1%

Age of Student Most of the freshmen **full-time** students beginning in Fall 1996 were still in their teens, as shown in Table VII. In fact, over fifty percent (51.9%) reported being eighteen years of age and another one-fourth reported being nineteen (25.3%). This means that over three-fourths of the freshmen **full-time** students are under twenty. The next highest percentage (8.1%) reported being 20 years old and another 6.7% reported being 21 to 24. Only 3.8% of the **full-time** students reported being over 25.

Table VII

Age on December 31, 1996	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=360	*N*=66	*N*=342
16 or younger	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
17	3.3%	1.5%	0.0%
18	51.9%	9.1%	2.0%
19	25.3%	28.8%	16.1%
20	8.1%	9.1%	18.7%
21 to 24	6.7%	12.1%	22.8%
25 to 29	1.9%	7.6%	15.2%
30 to 39	1.7%	21.2%	16.7%
40 to 54	0.8%	7.6%	6.7%
55 or older	0.3%	3.0%	1.5%

Year Graduated from High School Given the young age of these students, it is not surprising that most of them (three-fourths or 75.1%) graduated from high school the preceding June, as shown in Table VIII. Another 13.4% graduated in 1995 and 1994. Only 6.6% graduated from high school in 1993 or earlier.

Table VIII

Year Graduated from High School	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=350	*N*=58	*N*=344
1996	75.1%	31.0%	0.0%
1995	9.1%	13.8%	24.7%
1994	4.3%	10.3%	13.1%
1993 or earlier	6.6%	29.3%	50.3%
H.S. equivalency (G.E.D. test)	2.9%	8.6%	8.4%
never completed high school	2.0%	6.9%	3.5%

Miles From College to Home: Getting to college for these students requires either having a car or being close to adequate mass transportation. The largest percentage of our full-time freshmen (over three-fifths or 62.7%) travel between 11 to 50 miles from their home to the college, as shown in Table IX. Another fifth (19.0%) travel between 6 to 10 miles. A few determined students (5.3%) travel over fifty miles!

Table IX

Miles from College to Home	First-Time		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Transfer
	N=343	*N*=63	*N*=333
5 or less	13.1%	17.5%	12.6%
6 to 10	19.0%	17.5%	23.7%
11 to 50	62.7%	63.5%	58.6%
51 to 100	3.8%	0.0%	4.8%
101 to 500	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
more than 500	0.6%	1.6%	0.3%

Part-time Freshmen Students

Ethnic Background: The demographic characteristics of **part-time**, first-time students differ notably from full-time, first-time students. In terms of ethnic background, Blacks comprise a far greater percentage of part-time students (one-fourth of 25.4% compared to 13.0% full-time). The percentage of Asian Americans is notably higher, too, (9.5% compared to 2.9% full-time). Hispanics comprise over a fifth (22.2%) of the part-time students which is slightly higher than full-time (19.1%). It is with the white students that the biggest difference occurs. Only two-fifths of the part-time, freshmen students are white (41.2%) compared to 59.7% of the full-time students.

Native English Speaker: A substantially higher percentage of part-time, first-time students do not consider English their native tongue. Over thirty percent (30.3%) of the part-time, first-time students reported that English was not their native tongue compared to 22.3% of the full-time students. This large percentage is attributable to the fact that two-fifths (41.4%) of the part-time males reported English was not their native language.

Citizenship Status: While four-fifths (81.4%) of the full-time, freshmen students reported being US citizens, this was true for only 73.1% of the part-time students. Another 17.2% of the part-time students indicated they had green cards, and almost a tenth (9.4%) reported they had *neither* a green card nor were a US citizen. Only 1.4% of the full-time students reported having *neither*.

Religious Preference: A substantial difference exists between the full-time and part-time freshmen students in their religious preferences. Only 27.6% of the part-time students are Catholic, compared to 53.6% of the full-time freshmen. Over two-fifths of the part-time students (41.2%) are Protestants. Almost a fifth ((19.0%) profess no religion at all

Parental Income: Only 30 out of a total of 66 part-time respondents answered the question on parental income. This may be due to the fact that part-time students are older and, therefore, less dependent of their parents. Of the thirty, however, slightly over half (53.3%) reported having incomes over $40,000, while another fifth (20.0%) reported incomes between $30,000 and $39,000. Close to a fourth (23.4%) reported incomes below the HUD *very low income level* of $25,850.

Age: Part-time freshmen tend to be older. Almost a third, (31.8%) reported being over thirty compared to only 3.8% of the full-time freshmen. On the other hand, only 9.1 % reported being eighteen years old compared to 51.9% of the full-time freshman.

Year Graduated from High School: Less than a third (31.0%) of the part-time freshmen were June, 1996 graduates, while 75.1% of the full-time freshmen were. Conversely, almost a third (29.3%) had graduated from high school in *1993 or earlier*. Clearly part-time freshmen tend to be those who are returning to school after being away for some time.

Miles from College to Home. Part-time freshmen tend to be located closer to their homes than full-time freshmen. Thirty-five percent (35.0%) reported traveling no more than ten miles compared to 19.0% of the full-time freshmen, and 63.5% reported traveling between 11 and 50 miles. Only one student traveled over 50 miles.

Transfer Students*

First-time transfer students also differ significantly in demographic characteristics from full-time freshmen students and in some cases from part-time freshmen students.

Ethnic Background: Blacks and Asian American students comprise a slightly higher percentage of transfer students than full-time freshmen students. The percentage of transfer students reported being Black is 17.7% compared to 13.0% of the full-time freshmen students. The percentage of Asian/American transfer students is (8.5%) compared to only 2.9% of full-time freshmen. Moreover, white transfer students comprise only one-half of the class (50.3%) compared to 59.7% of the full-time freshmen class. Only Hispanic students show little difference between the percentage who are transfer students and full-time freshmen students. They comprised 21.6% of the transfers in the Fall 1996 class compared to 19.1% for the full-time freshmen.

Native English Speaker: A higher percentage of transfer students (26.9%) indicate that English is not their native tongue than first-time students (22.3%). It is the part-time students, however, who report the highest percentage of non-native English speaking status (30.3%).

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* The term *transfer student* refers only to first-time transfer students.

Citizenship Status: A lower percentage of transfers (72.3%) report US citizenship than full-time students (81.4%). Part-time students look very similar to the transfers (73.4%) in this regard. What is interesting is the differences in the percentages of students who report having *neither* a green card nor US citizenship. Only 1.4% of the full-time students report having *neither*, while 9.4% of the part-time students and 6.4% of the transfers reported having *neither*.

Religious Preference: Half (50.5%) of the transfer students reported being Roman Catholic in their religious preference--a percentage not too different from the full-time students (53.6%). The contrast occurs with the part-time students, where only 27.6% or a little more than one-fourth report their religious preference as being Roman Catholic.

Parental Income. When it comes to parental income, all three categories of first-time students--transfers, full-time students, and part-time students--are remarkably similar in the percentages who report parental incomes **above** the HUD *low income level* ($41,350). Around one half of the transfer students (49.9%), 53.3% of the part-time students, and 50.5% of the full-time students all reported parental incomes above $40,000. Conversely, around the same percentage in each category reported incomes below the HUD *very low income* level ($25,350). Thirty percent of the transfer students (28.4%) and 30.4% of the full-time students report parental incomes below the *very low income level*. A slightly lower percentage of part-time students (23.4%) reported incomes below the very low income level. Taken as a class therefore, parental income is not a factor that varies substantially among full-time, part-time and transfer students.

Age of Students. First-time transfer students tend to be older than both full-time freshmen and part-time freshmen. Only 18.4% reported being under twenty, in contrast to three-fourths (75.0%) of the full-time students and two-fifths (39.4%) of the part-time students. Two-fifths (41.5%) of the transfers are between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, while another two-fifths (40.1%) are over twenty-five.

Year Graduated From High School: It should come as no surprise than not one of the transfer students reported graduating the previous June, 1996. One-fourth (24.7%), however, did graduate in June 1995, having attended another college in the interim. The largest percentage of transfers, however, graduated from college more than four years ago. One half (50.3%) reported graduating in 1993 or before. Another 8.4% reported having a G. E. D.

Miles from College to Home. The miles traveled by transfer students to the college differ little from those of full-time and part-time students. The large majority (58.6%) travel between 11 and 50 miles, while a smaller percentage (23.7%) travel between 6 to 10 miles and an even smaller percentage (12.6%) travel 5 miles or less.

Summary and Conclusion

Fall 1996 may mark the semester in which Hispanic students became a major component of the Westchester Community College student body. The results of this freshmen survey show that almost one-fifth (19.1%) of the freshmen **full-time** students reported being of Hispanic background. Over one-fifth (22.3%) reported that English was not their native tongue, and 17.2% reported they held a green card and were not US citizens. Over half of the full-time freshman (53.5%) reported being Roman Catholic, and only 3.8% were over twenty-five. Three-fourths (77.2%), in fact, were under twenty.

Freshmen **part-time** students for the Fall 1996 class reported some important differences from their full-time classmates. Blacks comprise a greater percentage of part-time students (one-fourth 25.4% compared to 13.0% full-time) as do Asian Americans (9.5% compared to 2.9% of the full-time students). The same percentage (17.2%) of full and part-time students report they hold green cards, but a larger percentage of part-time students (9.4%) indicate they hold *neither* US citizenship nor a green card. The religious preference of part-time students differs, too. Only 27.6% of the part-time students report being Catholic compared to 53.6% of the full-time students. Instead, over two-fifths (41.2%) are Protestants. Finally, part-time students tend to be older. Almost one-third, (31.8%) reported being over thirty compared to only 3.8% of the full-time freshmen.

First-time **transfer** students, look more like first-time **full-time** students in their demographic makeup. While there is a slightly higher percentage of Blacks and Asian Americans transfers then among the full-time students, the percentage of Hispanic students is similar (21.6 % of the transfers and 19.1% of the full-time students). In fact, the highest percentage of Hispanic students appears among the transfer students. Over one-fourth of the transfer students (26.9%) indicate English is not their native tongue, and 21.3% hold green cards, and are not US citizens. Half of the transfer students (50.5%) reported being Roman Catholic. Finally, transfer students are in between full-time and part-time students with regard to their age, although they tend to be older. Three-fifths (59.9%) reported being under twenty-five and two-fifths (40.1%) over twenty-five.

The succinct conclusion of this report is that the demographic characteristics of the freshmen student body as reflected in the survey have changed substantially from those of previous years. The change is a considerable percentage increase in Hispanic students. With this has come, understandably, an increase in the percentage of non-native English speaking students, and non-US citizens. To the extent these students require special student services, special teaching techniques, and special courses to compete with the other students, the challenge to the College appears to be at hand.